

Arts education in America

What declines mean for participation: A study of SPPA data

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Photo by Joel Wanek



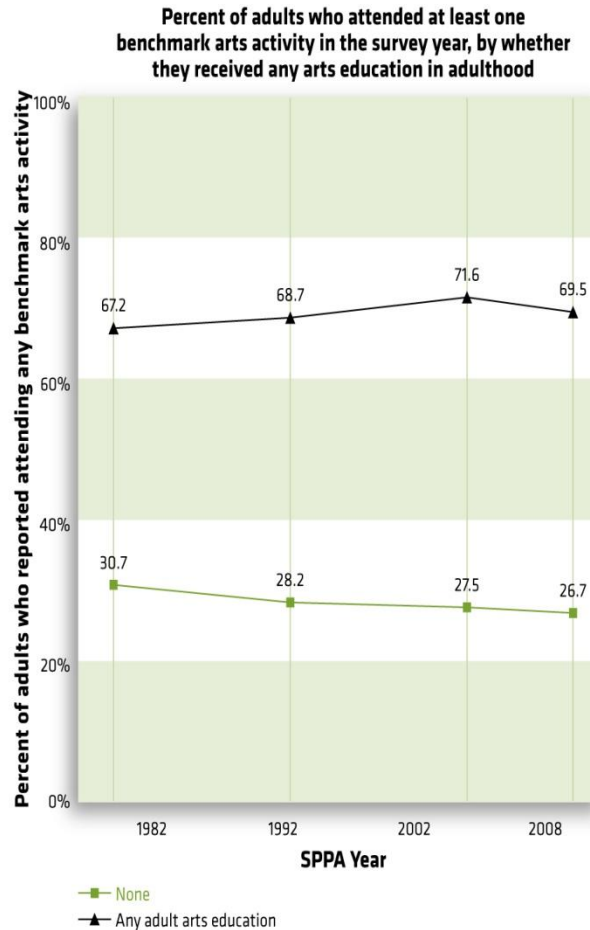
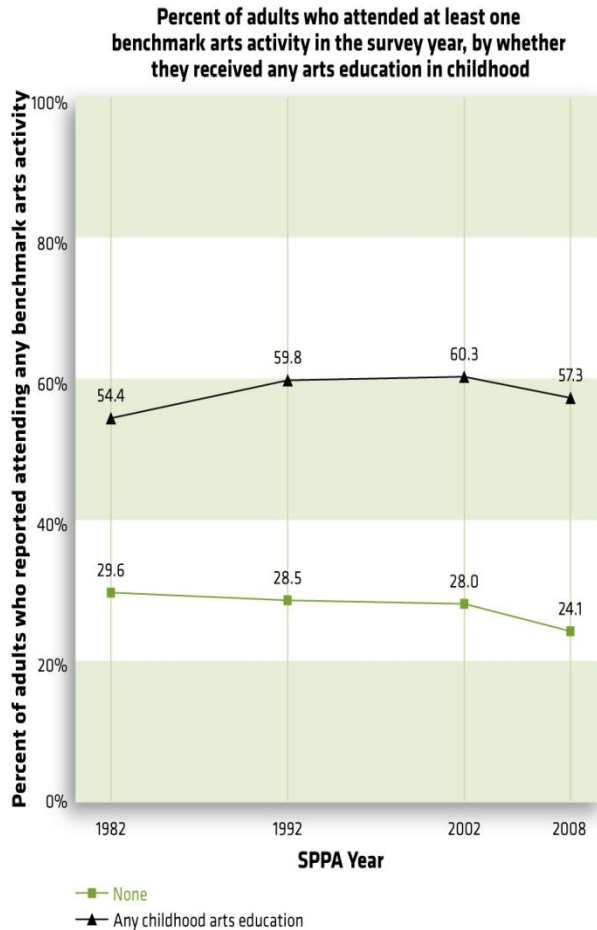
NORC
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

Our research questions:

- Is arts education consistently the strongest predictor of adult arts participation across all SPPAs?
- What are the trends over time in arts education? Has it increased or decreased across the years of the SPPAs?
- Has childhood arts education contributed to or mitigated declining adult arts participation?

Is arts education the most powerful predictor of adult participation?

Any childhood/adult arts lessons or classes and adult arts attendance

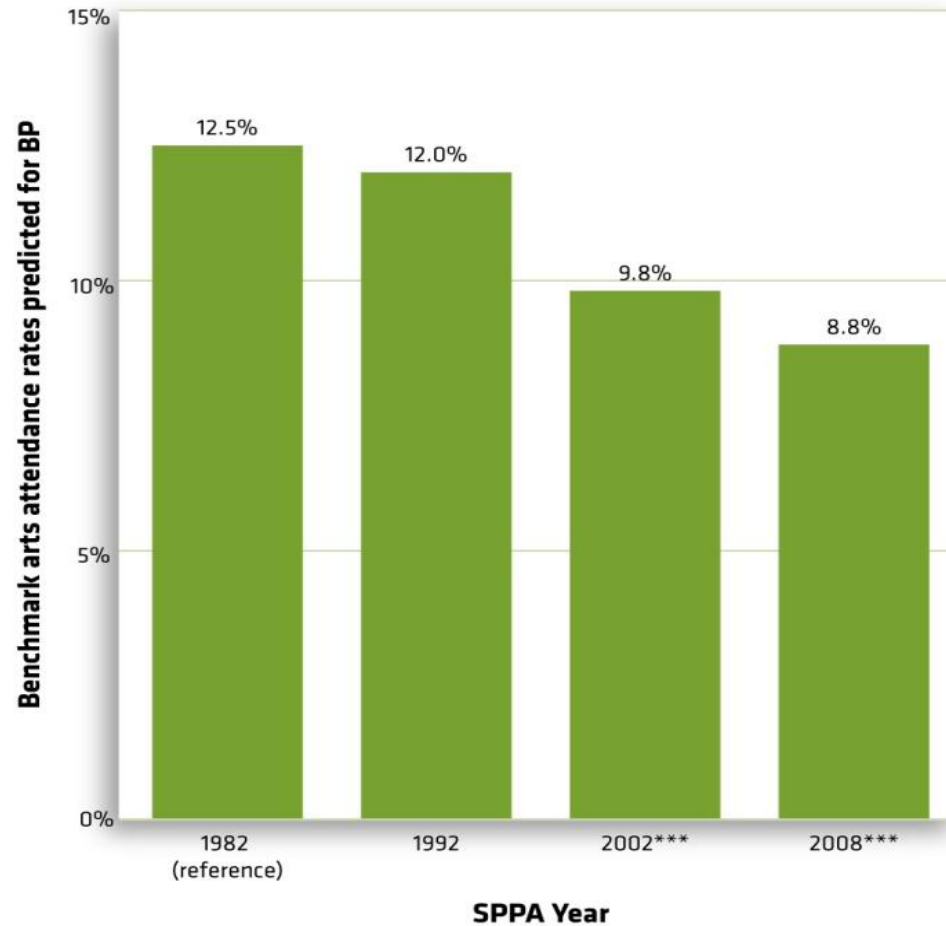


The powerful association between *any* childhood or adult arts ed and attendance at ‘benchmark’ arts events was consistent across every SPPA.

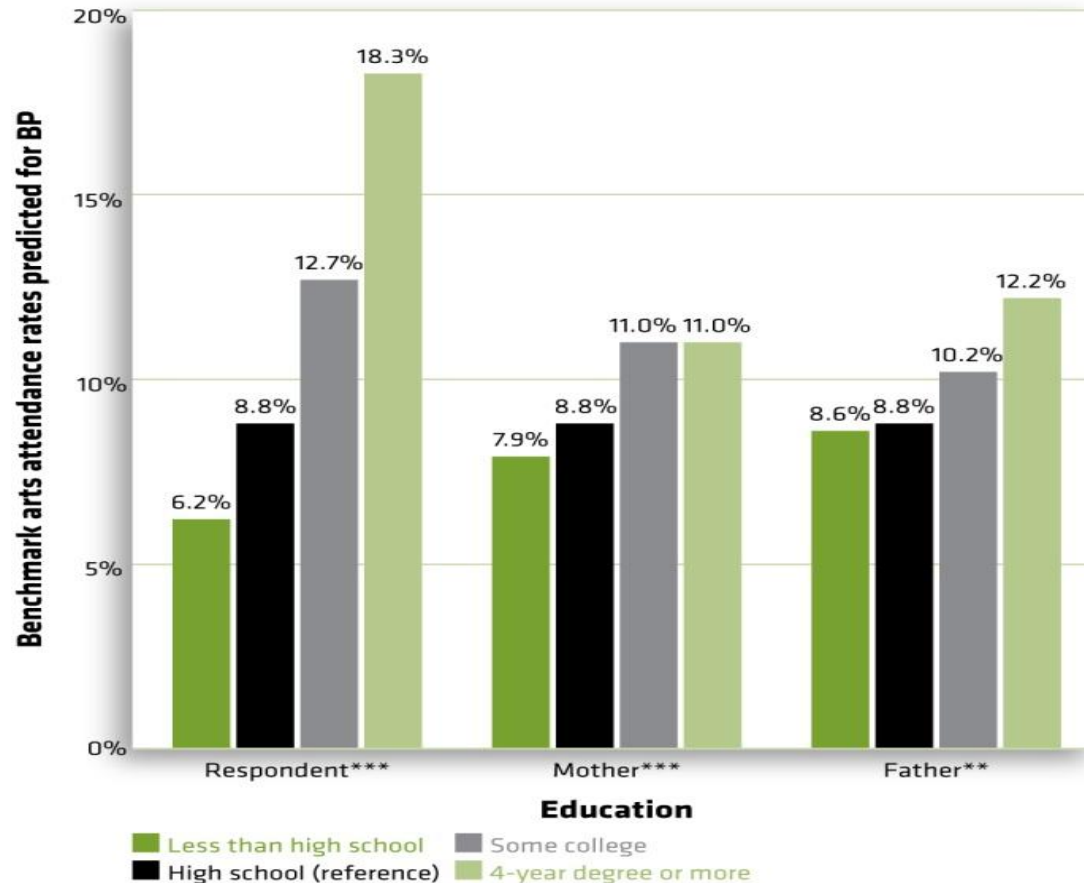
Introducing 'BP', a hypothetical baseline person for analysis

- White male
- 18 – 24 years-old
- Married
- Working
- High school education
- No arts education as child or as adult
- Lowest socio-economic quartile

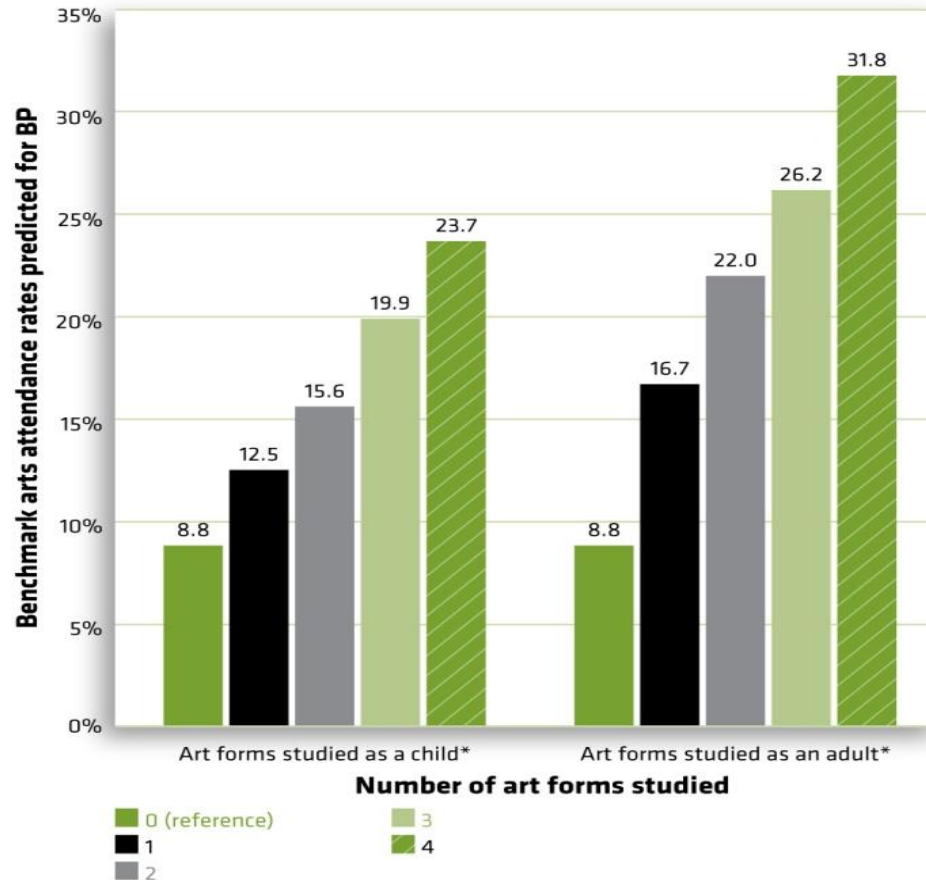
BP arts attendance by survey year



Educational attainment is a powerful predictor of attendance



But arts education is the most powerful predictor of attendance

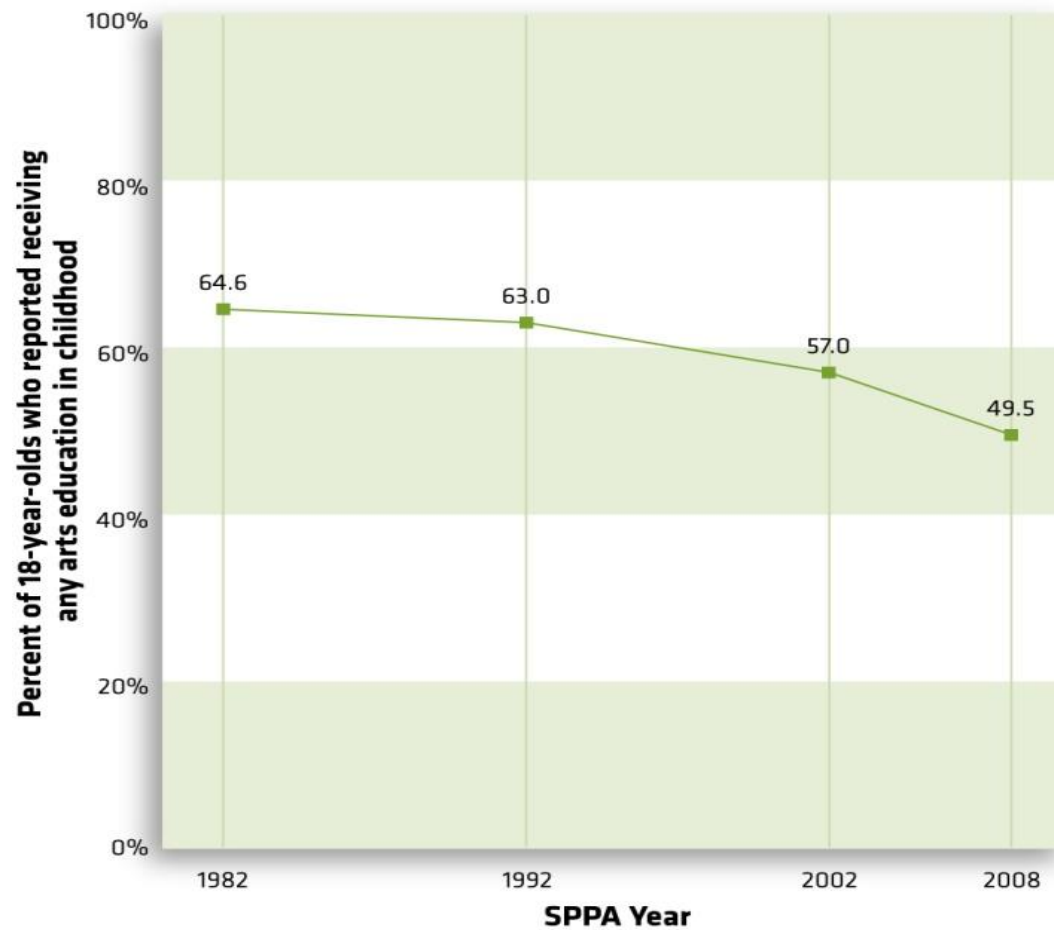


Attendance odds ratios by arts ed and ed attainment

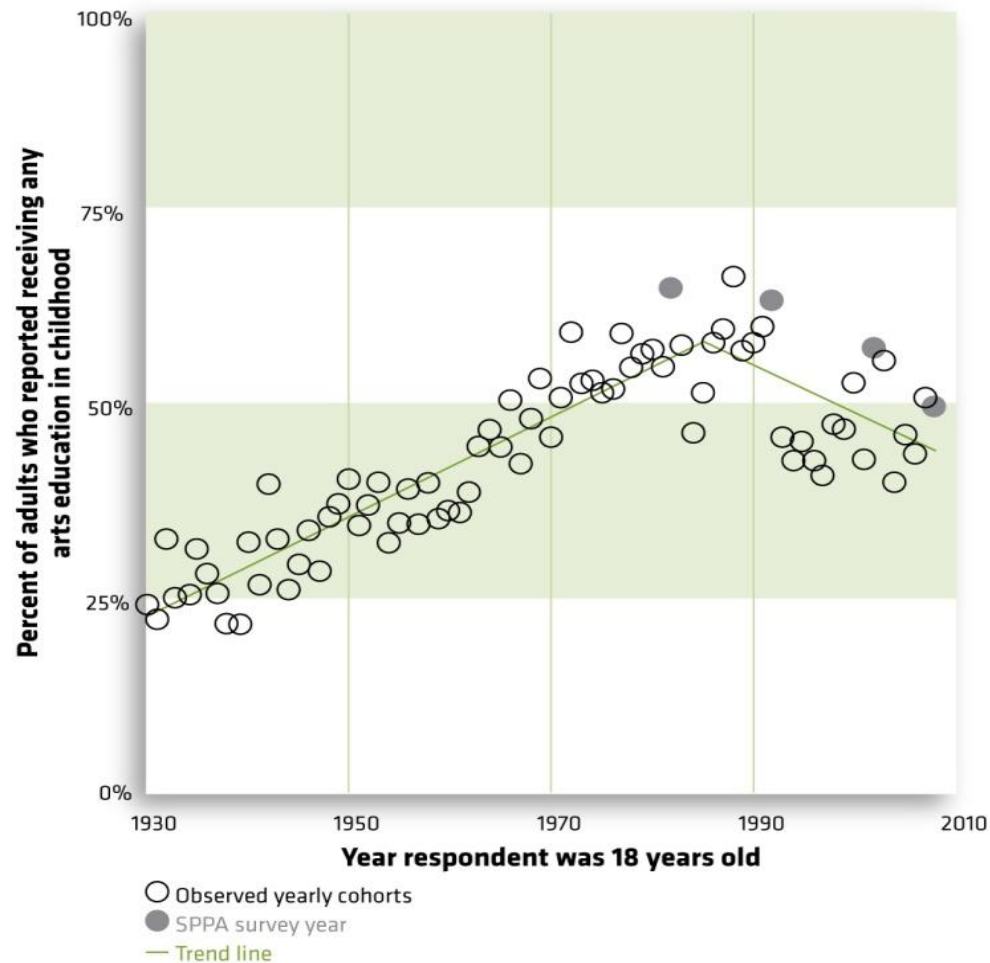
Child lessons	Odds ratio	Adult lessons	Odds ratio	Ed attainment	Odds ratio
0 Child lessons	1	0 adult lessons		HS	
1 child lesson	1.48	1 adult lesson	2.08	Some college	1.51
2 child lessons	1.92	2 adult lessons	2.92	4-year degree or more	2.32
3 child lessons	2.59	3 adult lessons	3.67		
4 child lessons	3.22	4 adult lessons	4.85		

What are the trends over time
in arts education?

18 year-olds who had any arts education as children



Childhood arts education 1930 - 2008

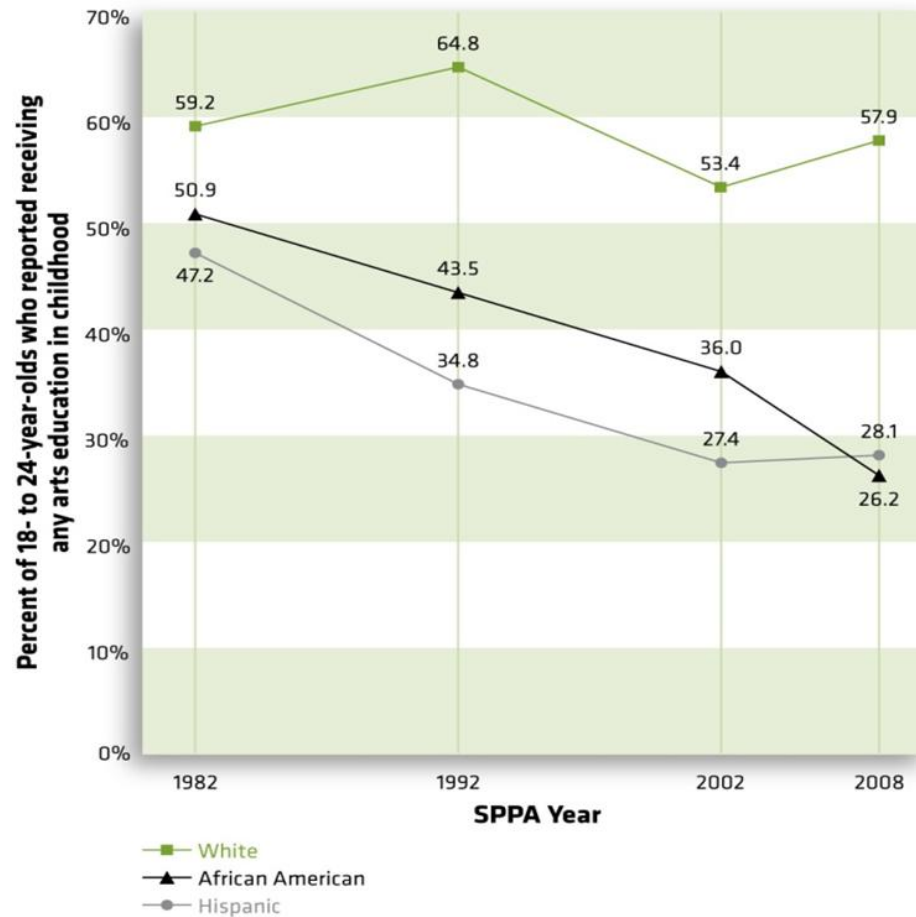


Why the decline in arts education?

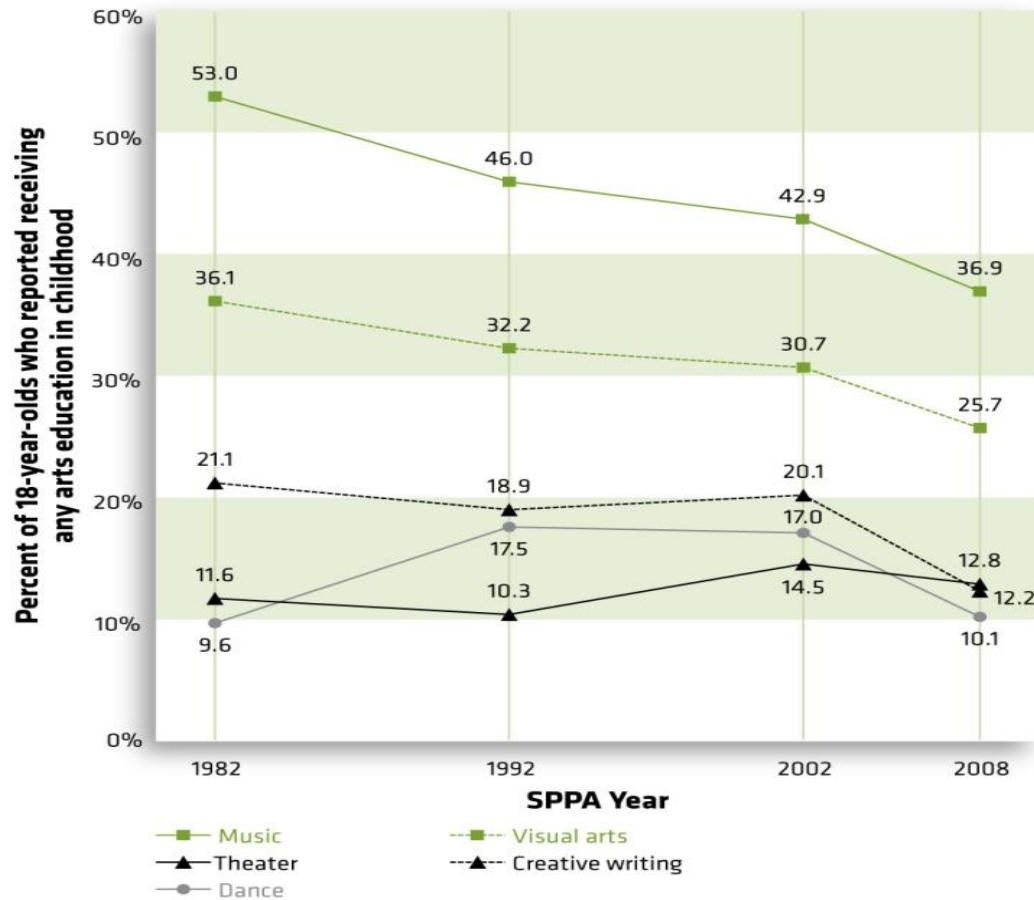
A perfect storm for arts education

- Fiscal crisis of late 70s and 80s combined with ‘tax revolt’ against costs of public services like education made cost cutting necessary.
- *A Nation at Risk* (1983) set the template for addressing a ‘rising tide of mediocrity’ in schools that threatened the nation. The arts were not in the picture in that report or in successive waves of school reform since.

Childhood arts education decline by race



Childhood arts education decline by art form



The decline has been concentrated in school-based arts education



We know this because the decline is primarily in music and visual arts, the forms most accessible in schools.

And concentrated in schools
that serve low-income
minority students.



Has the decline in arts education contributed to declining adult arts attendance?

Yes, but...



- Declining childhood arts education is surely not the only cause of declining attendance.
- Causality may be bi-directional. Declining interest in the arts may contribute to the decline in arts education.
- What about arts education is likely to contribute to adult participation in the arts?
- Educational policy on arts will not change to advance arts attendance goals.

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